Unequal Playing Field: Investigating Sponsorship Disparities Between Male and Female Athletes in Sport

Master Seminar Thesis

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List of Abbreviations

NFL: National Football League

NBA: National Basketball Association

MLS: Major League Soccer

LPGA: Ladies Professional Golf Association

PGA: Professional Golfers Association

WTA: Women's Tennis Association

WNBA: Women's National Basketball Association

Abstract

This seminar thesis, "Unequal Playing Field: Investigating Sponsorship Disparities Between Male and Female Athletes in Sport," explores the persistent sponsorship disparities between male and female athletes. Despite increasing visibility and interest in women's sports, female athletes continue to receive significantly less sponsorship support. Through an analysis of gender stereotypes, sexism, media representation, and organizational ideologies, this research examines the underlying factors contributing to these imbalances. Key findings reveal that traditional masculine norms within (sports) organizations, gendered media portrayals, and perceived risks associated with sponsoring women's sports perpetuate inequalities. The study concludes with a call for sports sponsors to adopt inclusive practices and suggests that addressing these disparities could redefine sponsorship models and support a shift toward equity in the sports industry.

1. Introduction

Sports sponsorship has become a crucial component of marketing strategies, with recent estimates valuing the global market at USD 55.1 billion in 2023 (360iResearch 2023) and projecting growth to USD 121.7 billion by 2032, representing a compound annual growth rate of 9.2% (Straits research 2024). This substantial market underlines the effectiveness of sponsorship in boosting brand awareness and facilitating positive attitude transfer from sponsored entities to brands. Sponsorship reduces the cognitive effort required for consumers to connect with the brand, making it an attractive marketing tool (Mazodier and Merunka 2012, p. 808).

While sponsorship opportunities exist for both male and female athletes, there are significant disparities in the level of support each athlete receives (GlobalWebIndex 2019). This imbalance is clear when examining sponsorship revenues across major U.S. sports leagues, with figures ranging from USD 1.88 billion for the National Football League, USD 1.6 billion for the National Basketball Association, to USD 0.68 billion for Major League Soccer (Sportico 2023).

Notably, no women's sports leagues make this list, underscoring the fact that they do not receive nearly the same level of sponsorship investment as their male counterparts. Further inspection of the top 100 highest-paid athletes reveals only two female athletes among the top earners (Statista 2020). Despite recent advancements and a growing interest in women's sports (Women's Sport Trust 2024), the sponsorship landscape continues to favour male athletes and traditional male-dominated sports.

This research paper addresses the significant disparity in sponsorship investments between male and female athletes, despite increasing visibility and interest in women's sports.

To understand why these imbalances persist, this study investigates the factors contributing to the sponsorship disparities, focusing specifically on women's sports. By examining prevalent gender stereotypes and types of sexism, masculine ideologies within organizations, media representation, and the perceived risks marketing managers face when sponsoring female athletes, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of why these disparities persist.

Therefore, this seminar paper, "Unequal Playing Field: Investigating Sponsorship Disparities Between Male and Female Athletes in Sport," sheds light on the biases and systemic challenges that female athletes face. Addressing these issues is crucial for marketers and sponsors, who aspire to create a more inclusive and equitable sports environment. Furthermore, the findings can offer valuable insights for sponsors aiming to engage with the growing market of women's sports, helping them develop strategies that not only promote gender equality but also enhance brand value and consumer engagement.

This paper is organized as follows: The first chapter establishes the theoretical foundations by exploring general gender stereotypes (2.1.1), disparities in media coverage between male and female athletes (2.1.2), and providing a detailed explanation of the concept of sponsorship (2.1.3). Following this, the paper analyzes the gender gap in professional sports: in terms of sponsorship, revenue, and societal perceptions and examines the interconnected factors that contribute to these imbalances (3.2).

2.   Theoretical Foundations

This part of the paper aims to explain key theories related to gender stereotypes, media representation, and sponsorship marketing, establishing a foundation for exploring how these elements interact and contribute to the existing inequalities in sponsorship deals.

2.1 Gender Representation in Sports

2.1.1 Gender roles and stereotypes. The practice of categorizing individuals based on gender is distorted by the influence of gender stereotypes, which provide an overly simplistic and inadequate representation of reality. These structures serve to reinforce the perceived boundaries between women and men and provide a rationale for the symbolic and social implications of gender with regard to the differentiation of roles and the perpetuation of social inequality (Ellemers 2018, p. 278). Moreover, stereotypes can lead to oversimplified perceptions and misjudgments, resulting in inaccurate evaluations of individuals within social groups (Eisend 2010, p. 419). Research has shown that these biases affect our assessments of men's and women's abilities, with identical outcomes being judged differently based solely on the performer's gender (Ellemers 2018, p. 278). Thus, gender stereotyping - particularly concerning role behaviors and occupational roles - can severely restrict women's opportunities in life, especially in their careers (Eisend 2010, p. 419; Ellemers 2018, p. 278).

Media representation further reinforces stereotypical gender roles by predominantly depicting men in expert or authoritative positions and women in caregiving roles in advertisements, TV series, and other media (Matthews 2007, p. 523). Eisend's (2010, p. 431) Research reveals that women are 3.5 times more likely than men to be portrayed in domestic settings in the media. At the same time, their likelihood of being depicted in authoritative roles is less than one-third of that of men. Social Role Theory explains this by suggesting that these stereotypes arise from observing men and women in societal roles that are perceived to require different personality traits and competencies. As a result, people come to believe that men and women inherently possess different attributes that align with the activities they commonly perform in society (Bosak, Sczesny, and Eagly 2012, p. 429; Eagly 1987). Furthermore, media coverage of public figures often emphasizes the achievements of men, particularly in fields like sports and politics, while for women in the same fields, the focus is more frequently on their

appearance rather than their accomplishments (Ellemers 2018, p. 248). In conclusion, the perpetuation of gender stereotypes has been observed to enhance performance in domains that are perceived to align with traditional gender roles, while simultaneously impeding success in areas that contradict these stereotypes (Koenig and Eagly 2005, p. 494).

2.1.2 The media portrayal of female athletes. As discussed in 2.1.1, stereotypes create social expectations (Bosak, Sczesny, and Eagly 2012; Eagly 1987) and limit opportunities, especially for women (Eisend 2010; Ellemers 2018). Historically, this pattern has been evident in women's sports, where attention has often focused on female athletes' appearance rather than their performance (Ellemers 2018, p. 284). Furthermore, research has indicated that sports commentators were more inclined to attribute male athletes' accomplishments to factors such as "hard work" and "strength", whereas the success of female athletes was frequently undermined by factors such as "luck" or "family". This suggests a portrayal of men as "active agents in control of their destinies and women as reactive entities" (Harrison and Lynch 2005, p. 229; Messner, Duncan, and Jensen 1993, p. 130). A notable example of this phenomenon occurred at the 2016 Wimbledon tennis tournament, where news reports extensively covered Serena Williams' tennis dress, rather than her exceptional performance on the court (Ellemers 2018, p. 284). This example illustrates how female athletes are frequently depicted in a manner that accentuates their femininity over their athletic abilities (Kane and Maxwell 2011, p. 204). It is a commonly accepted view amongst marketers and advertisers that this approach represents an optimal strategy for fostering interest among fans. This is particularly evident when the objective is to tackle low attendance and viewership rates by reinforcing conventional ideas of femininity and heterosexuality (Kane and Buysse 2005, p. 232). However, Fink, Cunningham, and Kensickis (2004, p. 363) contradict this claim, as they found that emphasizing a female athlete's level of expertise generated more positive attitudes toward a sporting event than

focusing on her physical attractiveness[1]. Similarly, Kane and Maxwell (Cooky et al. 2021) identified a consistent trend where showcasing athletic prowess garnered the highest level of fan interest, while sexualized portrayals of female athletes resulted in the lowest interest, even to the extent of discouraging potential consumers[2]. Despite the existing evidence, this pattern of representation continues to dominate media coverage and marketing strategies related to women's sports (Kane and Maxwell 2011, p. 204).

Moreover, female athletes receive significantly less media coverage than their male counterparts. In a three-decade-long study, Cooky et al. (2021) analyzed the visibility of women's sports in the media. One pivotal finding from 2019 demonstrated that a mere 5.4% of television content was dedicated to women's sports, in stark contrast to 91% devoted to men's sports (p. 253). Another notable finding was the difference in tone used by commentators when presenting women's sports events, which lacked the enthusiasm typically associated with men's sports coverage. The dull, monotonous commentary was labelled "gender-bland sexism" by the authors and was identified as a dominant pattern in 2019 television news stories covering women's sports (Cooky et al. 2021, p. 359).

Additionally, male athletes and men's sports are often depicted as the standard in both language and imagery, while female athletes and women's competitions are positioned as secondary. For instance, many women's championship titles include explicit gender markers. To illustrate, the titles of numerous women's championships are gender-marked (e.g. FIFA Women's World Cup), whereas the men's competitions are considered the default standard (e.g. FIFA World Cup) (Messner, Duncan, and Jensen 1993, p. 125). The media, especially sports media, often mirror societal conventions of gender-discriminatory language. Such practices

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[1] See Table A1
[2] See Figure A2 and A3

reinforce the inherent biases within language, thereby contributing to the perpetuation of social inequalities (Messner, Duncan, and Jensen 1993. p. 133).

Two approaches help explain the phenomenon of gendered media coverage in sports: Holbrook's (1987) "mirror" theory and Pollay's (1986) "mold" theory. The "mirror" theory suggests that media reflects existing societal values, amplifying the prevailing norms, beliefs, and attitudes found within society. Applied to sports, this perspective argues that media coverage of male and female athletes mirrors the broader social dynamics of gender inequality, reproducing ingrained biases and stereotypes that highlight male dominance. Evidence supporting this view shows that shifts toward gender equality in society are often followed by more balanced media representations, indicating that societal changes drive media portrayals rather than media independently instigating these changes (Eisend 2010, p. 436)[3]. On the other hand, the "mold" theory posits that media has the power to shape and influence public values. According to this perspective, changes in media portrayal could actively contribute to societal progress, though no empirical evidence supports this approach (Eisend 2010, p. 434).

2.2 Sports Sponsorship and Commercialization

Sponsorship can be defined as an investment, in the form of financial or non-financial contributions, made to an event, individual, or concept. "Sponsorship marketing" refers to the strategic planning and execution of activities designed to establish and communicate a link between a sponsor and the sponsored entity. Unlike advertising, which typically involves a direct and controlled messaging approach, sponsorships often require upfront fees with anticipated future benefits (Cornwell, Weeks, and Roy 2005, p. 21). Another distinct feature of sponsorship is the active involvement of a second party, which is which is not the case in

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[3] See Table A4

traditional advertising (Speed and Thompson 2000, p. 226). Additionally, consumers often approach sponsorship communications with a positive attitude, as the commercial intent and underlying message are not immediately obvious. This positive sentiment, or "halo of goodwill," has the effect of lowering consumer defense mechanisms when encountering sponsorship communications. In contrast, advertising communication is often met with skepticism and suspicion, given that the commercial intent and motivation of advertisers are known to consumers (Meenaghan 2001, p. 101).

For a company, sponsorship is an effective way to boost brand awareness. It allows the positive attitudes and associations connected with the sponsored entity to transfer to the brand, reducing the cognitive processing consumers need to make this connection (Mazodier and Merunka 2012, p. 808). While fan- or consumer-focused sponsorship generally aims to enhance awareness, shape attitudes, improve brand image, or influence purchase intentions, sponsorship can also have the side effect of sparking interest and generating general goodwill among non-engaged audiences. The primary objective, however, is to leverage the consumer's relationship with the sponsored entity to guide them through the purchase funnel—from awareness and consideration to shaping attitudes, driving purchases, and encouraging word-of-mouth (WOM) promotion (Cornwell, Weeks, and Roy 2005, p. 21). Sponsorship effectiveness was proven to be influenced, among other things, by the fit between the sponsor and the sponsored entity and the type of exposure the sponsor receives (Olson and Mathias Thjømøe 2009, p. 505). Furthermore, for sponsorship to succeed, specific effectiveness drivers are particularly influential and essential in reaching the desired sponsorship goals. In a meta-analysis of sponsorship studies conducted by Kim, Barasz, and John (2019, p. 421), it was found that identification with a sponsored entity is a more reliable predictor of behavioural outcomes (e.g. purchase behaviour) in the cases of non-profit organizations and sports sponsorships than in the case of a commercial organization and non-sport sponsorships. Therefore, in the context of

sports and non-profit organizations, it is essential to select a suitable entity for sponsorship by analyzing the level of identification of the target consumers with the sponsored entity.

It is important to recognize that sports sponsorship offers several advantages over other forms of sponsorship, including the potential for long-term connections with a loyal audience and access to potential customers through databases. Additionally, there is a more direct link between the sponsored product and the lived experiences of the sponsored sport (Cornwell, Pruitt, and Clark 2005, p. 403), which is a key benefit in this context. A successful sports sponsorship serves as a strategic business-to-business (B2B) relationship that is mutually beneficial for both the sponsor and the sports entity or athlete (Yazdanparast and Bayar 2021, p. 141). In their pursuit of developing robust brands with considerable market value, companies have increasingly turned to sports sponsorship as a crucial instrument for meeting their brand management objectives (Amis 2003, p. 208).

3. Recent Research Insights

This section examines current sponsorship disparities between male and female athletes. It presents and analyzes up-to-date data on gender-based inequalities in sports sponsorship, using recent statistics and real-world examples to illustrate differences in revenues, media exposure, and overall support. By identifying patterns and trends, this section reveals the root causes of sponsorship imbalances and provides a basis for understanding how gender dynamics impact commercial support in athletics.

3.1 The Gender Gap in Professional Sports: Sponsorship, Revenue, and Societal

Perceptions

The existence of women's professional sports has been overshadowed by that of its male counterparts for numerous years. This is evidenced by several factors, including lower attendance rates, a smaller number of television viewers, and a lack of funding, sponsorships and support to grow. Furthermore, the discrepancy in compensation is often justified by the assertion that women's sports are less marketable (Cooky, Messner, and Hextrum 2013, p. 19; Statista 2020). However, recent statistical evidence indicates that a greater proportion of men than women are engaged with professional leagues for female athletes. Specifically, 57% of the demographic is male and 47% is female. This offers significant potential for advertisers and sponsors seeking to engage with a large and diverse audience (GWI 2019).

To this date, tennis remains the only sport in which female athletes can compete with their male counterparts in terms of income. This is evidenced by the fact that only tennis professionals, such as Serena Williams and Naomi Osaka, were able to break into the top 100 list of highest-paid sports stars worldwide (Statista 2020). Tennis is making notable progress towards gender equality, as indicated by the equal prize money earned by female players and the fact that the sport's four largest tournaments – the Grand Slams – are held as combined gender events, attracting considerable audiences and generating substantial profits. However, female tennis stars are perceived as less marketable, as illustrated by the discrepancy in their sponsorship values. For instance, Serena Williams' sponsorship value was 25 million US dollars, whereas Roger Federer's sponsorship value was 86 million US dollars (Sportcal 2019).

The disparity is also clear in golf, where the prize pool for the 33 events on the Ladies Professional Golf Association tour (LPGA) totals 101.4 million US dollars, while the Professional Golfers Association (PGA) tour offers 460 million US dollars in prize money (Statista 2023). Additionally, Annika Sörenstam, a professional female golfer, has career

earnings of 22.57 million US dollars, placing her only around 68th on the men's all-time earnings list (LPGA 2023). These examples from golf and tennis highlight the ongoing impact of gender inequality in sports, while also signaling areas of progress.

According to the *Sponsor United Report: Women in Sports Marketing Partnerships* (2024), the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) and the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) became the first women's professional sports leagues to exceed 1,000 sponsorship deals. Together with the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), these leagues have been key drivers in the growth of women's sports sponsorships. In the past year, over 5,500 sponsorships were activated across these leagues, with the LPGA leading with 1,100 deals, marking a 25% increase year-over-year (YoY). The WTA also experienced strong growth, with the highest YoY increase among the leagues at 34%, reaching a total of 1,080 deals. The WNBA also achieved a significant milestone, seeing a 7% increase and surpassing 500 sponsorships for the first time (Sponsor United 2024).

This indicates that both society and sponsors continue to adhere to gender stereotypes. The two most successful women's professional sports leagues, in terms of sponsorships, are in sports traditionally seen as "feminine" and "aesthetic" (Shaw and Amis 2001, 224). These "female-appropriate" sports are often characterized by feminine attire, aesthetic appeal, and the absence of physical contact (Fink 2015, p. 334). Kane's (1988, p. 97) Research reinforces this view, showing that sports like tennis and golf, considered "sex-appropriate," are more popular and accepted for women to participate in, as they pose less of a challenge to traditional gender norms compared to "sex-inappropriate" sports such as basketball[4]. Although research and recent data confirm that sports perceived as feminine attract the highest levels of sponsorship within women's sports, these deals still fall significantly short when compared to those of their male counterparts.

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[4] See Table A5

The National Basketball Association (NBA), compared to the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) also shows clear differences in the revenue generated from sponsorship deals. The NBA is the second-highest valued sports league globally, with a total value of 3.85 billion US dollars (Forbes 2023b) and a minimum annual player salary of 1.16 million US dollars for the 2024/25 season (Statista 2024). In 2023, the league's total sponsorship revenue was 1.66 billion US dollars (Forbes 2023a). Despite women's basketball being the third most-watched women's live sport in the United States, following the Olympics and tennis (LG Ads Solutions 2024), the disparity in revenue compared to NBA is striking. The WNBA has a sponsorship revenue of just 671.5 million US dollars (GlobalData 2024) and an overall revenue of 60 million US dollars (Statista 2020). Furthermore, only 10% of the WNBA's revenue is reinvested in its players, whereas NBA players receive 50% of the league's revenue (CNN 2024). The development of professional women's basketball leagues has faced significant challenges, with multiple attempts failing before the WNBA's successful establishment in 1997- more than 50 years after the NBA's founding in 1946 (Kane 1988, p. 97; Statista 2020). This relatively recent inception has limited the league's time to cultivate a robust fan base and global presence compared to long-established men's leagues.

The disparity in funding and resources between men's and women's professional basketball has further contributed to the slower growth of women's leagues in terms of revenue and attendance. However, it is crucial to note that sports traditionally considered "feminine" had earlier opportunities for development and acceptance (Fink 2015, p. 334; Shaw and Amis 2001, p. 224; Sponsor United 2024). Despite these historical setbacks, there appears to be untapped potential in women's sports today. Interestingly, research indicates that more men than women currently follow professional women's leagues, suggesting a largely unaddressed audience base (GWI 2019).

3.2 Factors Influencing Sponsorship Decisions

As outlined in 3.1, significant sponsorship disparities between male and female athletes persist across various sports. This chapter delves deeper into the factors influencing sponsorship decisions and explores why such differences between male and female athletes continue to exist. It is important to recognize that these factors are often interconnected and influence each other.

3.2.1 Sexism. Social-psychological research reveals that patterns of inequality often persist across different social groups, including those defined by race, class, and other categories (Jost, Banaji, and Nosek 2004). However, gender relations possess unique characteristics that shape how sexism is understood and experienced, setting it apart from other forms of inequality. In other words, while there are general patterns that maintain inequality across various groups, sexism has specific features that make it different from other forms of inequality (Bareket and Fiske 2023, p. 638). According to Glick and Fiske (2001) "ambivalent sexism theory", the interactions between men and women are influenced by both power imbalances and mutual dependence. This dynamic leads to two distinct forms of sexist attitudes: hostile sexism (HS) and benevolent sexism (BS). Hostile sexism is characterized by openly negative, antagonistic attitudes towards women, especially those who are perceived as challenging male authority or striving for dominance. It often manifests through discrimination and is motivated by a desire to maintain male power and control. Conversely, benevolent sexism appears to be more positive and protective, manifesting as admiration for women who conform to traditional, nurturing roles. However, this seemingly supportive attitude can be just as detrimental, as it reinforces restrictive gender norms by rewarding women who fit conventional expectations while discouraging those who deviate (Bareket and Fiske 2023, p. 675).

In the realm of sports, these forms of sexism manifest in nuanced but significant ways. "Feminine" sports - those that align with traditional ideals of grace, aesthetics, and non-aggression, such as tennis and golf (Fink 2015, p. 334; Kane 1988, p. 97) - tend to attract more sponsorship opportunities compared to other women's sports (Sponsor United 2024). This is because they do not challenge conventional gender norms, allowing sponsors to align their brands with socially accepted notions of femininity.

This preference for "feminine" sports aligns with the principles of benevolent sexism, as it reflects an appreciation for women perceived as conforming to traditional roles. While this may result in financial support for female athletes, it perpetuates a system where attributes associated with femininity are more marketable and commercially viable than those seen as masculine, such as strength and assertiveness (Napoli, Nicholls, and Ouschan 2024, p. 88). In effect, sponsors may leverage deeply entrenched social norms to their advantage, ensuring that sports emphasizing traditional femininity receive more attention and funding.

3.2.2 Masculine ideologies in organizations and sports. Jost (2006, p. 653) defines ideology as a shared belief system that shapes and motivates an individual's political actions and perspectives. In the context of masculinity, this refers to socially constructed norms and beliefs that dictate how men are expected to behave according to cultural standards. Masculine ideologies frame masculinity as a set of culturally influenced expectations, shaping the behaviors and attitudes considered acceptable for men and reinforcing traditional male norms such as dominance, emotional restraint, and self-reliance. This dominant masculinity ideology, which defines social norms for the male gender role, is thought to support existing gender-based power structures in the Western world, often privileging men within these systems (Levant 2011, p. 768).

Shaw and Amis (2001, p. 223) observed that both sports and organizations/firms are significantly influenced by masculine ideologies, beliefs, and power structures. Consequently, it is not surprising that the sponsorship decisions made by these firms often reflect their values. For example, corporate hospitality, a common element of sponsorship deals, is typically aimed at male-dominated sports and is based on traditional male ideologies. To gain further insight into the persistence of masculine ideologies in corporate culture, it is vital to comprehend the stereotypical perceptions held by society, which associate men with competitive and assertive behaviour and women with nurturing roles (see 2.1) (Chizema, Kamuriwo, and Shinozawa 2015, p. 1052; Koenig et al. 2011, p. 616).

In the workplace, particularly in boardrooms, women are often found in lower-level positions within hierarchies of status and authority and are less likely to reach the highest levels of organizational leadership (Heilman 2001, p. 671), where assertiveness and agency are typically expected (Chizema, Kamuriwo, and Shinozawa 2015, p. 1052). In their 2011 meta-analysis, Koenig et al. (2011) examined leadership perceptions across three research paradigms: Think manager–think male, agency–communion, and masculinity-femininity. Their findings consistently showed that leadership traits are perceived as masculine, with male stereotypes such as assertiveness, dominance, and independence more closely aligned with leadership than female stereotypes, which emphasize communal traits like compassion and warmth. This association between masculinity and leadership traits reinforces gender bias against women, as the divergence between traditional female stereotypes and leadership expectations often results in biased evaluations, ultimately hindering women's progression to top leadership roles (p. 637)[5].

Furthermore, the sports industry continues to reinforce traditional notions of masculinity, frequently exhibiting a male-dominated environment (Cunningham 2008, p. 139).

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[5] See A6 and A7

Anderson (2009) describes sports as a central institution for cultivating masculinity, emphasizing traits such as physical strength, aggression, and competitiveness. These qualities are not only accepted and celebrated but establish male dominance as a norm (p. 4) Despite societal progress toward gender equality and broader acceptance of diverse identities, he notes that sports organizations remain highly resistant to change (p. 5). He attributes this resistance to cultural hegemony, as traditional masculine values are so deeply woven into sports culture that they continue to prevail, even with growing calls for inclusivity (p. 4). This persistence is reinforced by established cultural norms and organizational structures that prioritize traditional masculine roles. Even when women hold roles within these organizations, they are often pressured to align with the dominant masculine culture rather than contributing their unique perspectives (p. 5-7). This aligns with Shaw and Ami's (2001, p. 224) view that the prevailing values and beliefs within an organization significantly influence decision-makers, ultimately shaping the sponsorship investments a firm chooses to pursue.

3.2.3 Media coverage of women's sport. The level of media coverage accorded to women's sports remains comparatively limited, particularly in comparison to that dedicated to traditional men's sports (Cooky et al. 2021, p. 253). Moreover, the lack of media coverage results in reduced public awareness of female athletes and their achievements. This also harms the overall number of spectators at matches. Thus, there is a continued lack of interest in sponsorships, which has an overall negative impact on the resources available to women's sports for both paying athletes and promoting events, ultimately contributing to the perpetuation of institutionalized discrimination (Caple, Greenwood, and Lumby 2011, p. 143). The significance of media exposure in sponsorship decisions was also highlighted by Meenaghan (1983, p. 23, 35), who emphasized that media visibility is crucial for firms considering sponsorships as part of their marketing communication strategy. The level of coverage that a specific athlete, team,

or event receives is a critical element in determining its sponsorship value because, in the case of an uninvolved audience, the sponsorship effects are limited to, at most, generating goodwill (Meenaghan 2001, p. 101).

However, sponsorship effectiveness is generally measured by its ability to shape positive attitudes, influence purchase intentions, and leverage the consumer's relationship with the sponsored entity to guide them through the purchase funnel (see 2.2). This process becomes challenging when there is no inherent interest in or relationship with the sponsored entity (Cornwell, Weeks, and Roy 2005, 21; Meenaghan 2001, 101).

It should also be acknowledged, that the stereotypes and images conveyed by the media are equally significant factors (Shaw and Amis 2001, p. 224). The limited media coverage of women's sports is often attributed to market constraints and the desire to cater to audience preferences (Cooky, Messner, and Hextrum 2013, p. 19). However, this perspective overlooks how these factors perpetuate male dominance by downplaying and overlooking the achievements of female athletes, often manifesting as a lack of enthusiasm in commentary on women's sports and an emphasis on femininity over athletic skill (see 2.1.2). These practices ultimately reduce the appeal of women's sports for viewers (Fink 2015, p. 335). Another factor, as identified in 3.2.1, is the inclination of the media to prioritize sports that align with conventional notions of femininity. This phenomenon reflects the prevalence of benevolent sexism in sports, which results in the perpetuation of "gender-appropriate" media coverage of women and the reinforcement of stereotypes (Sherry, Osborne, and Nicholson 2016, p .301). This suggests that marketers generally respond to existing gender norms in society, using these prevailing values to promote their brands rather than attempting to challenge or change them (Eisend 2010, 436).

This interplay of factors contributes significantly to the maintenance of male hegemony in sports while simultaneously shaping public perception of female athletes and the perceived

value of women's sports. The limited media coverage, coupled with the perpetuation of gender stereotypes, creates a self-reinforcing cycle that continues to marginalize women's sports in both media representation and economic opportunities (Shaw and Amis 2001, p. 227). This strategy sustains the status quo by limiting the diversity of women's sports that receive support, and in doing so, it restricts the broader development and visibility of women's athletics as a whole.

3.2.4 Perceived risks in sponsoring women's sports. When investigating why female athletes receive fewer sponsorship deals than men, it is crucial to examine not only the predominant masculine ideologies in sports and organizations but also the perceived risks for marketers in sponsoring entities that receive limited media attention (see 3.2.3). These risks are often influenced by long-standing biases that favour male-dominated sports, where leagues have historically received greater exposure, funding, and promotional efforts (Cooky et al. 2021, p. 253; Statista 2020).

In making sponsorship decisions, marketers frequently attempt to mitigate risks by modelling their actions on those of other successful organizations. This reliance on imitation often stems from a lack of innovation in sponsorship strategies, leading to a self-reinforcing cycle where male-dominated sports maintain a disproportionate share of sponsorship simply due to their historical success (Shaw and Amis 2001, p. 241).

DiMaggio and Powell (1983, p. 151) recognized this tendency of organizations to imitate others, terming it the "mimetic process." This behaviour is particularly common when organizations face uncertainty, as mimetic strategies offer a practical and cost-effective solution to complex problems. When confronted with decisions involving unpredictable outcomes, managers often choose to reduce risks by emulating the actions of other firms that are perceived as successful. This mimicry helps organizations navigate uncertain scenarios by following

established patterns of behaviour. For instance, if a major brand chooses to sponsor a popular men's sports team, other companies may see this as a signal of a worthwhile investment, leading to a chain reaction where men's sports continue to receive disproportionate support.

Moreover, as highlighted in section 3.2.3, media exposure plays a crucial role in determining the value of a sponsorship investment. The relationship between media visibility and sponsorship value is significant, as regular media coverage enhances brand exposure, which in turn makes sponsorship more attractive to companies (Cornwell, Pruitt, and Clark 2005, p. 21; Meenaghan 1983, 35). However, the uncertainty surrounding media coverage for emerging women's sports leagues and events can significantly impact corporate sponsorship decisions. Sponsors are often reluctant to commit resources to properties that lack a proven track record of media visibility and fan engagement. Without reliable data on viewership, attendance, and public interest, companies find it challenging to assess the potential return on investment when sponsoring women's sports initiatives. This uncertainty acts as a major deterrent, making sponsors more cautious about supporting new or developing women's sports properties, especially when compared to established men's leagues that offer assured media reach and audience engagement (Morgan 2019, p. 14).

4. Discussion

4.1 Critical Evaluation

Building on the analysis of factors influencing the sponsorship decisions of female athletes, it is evident that existing gender disparities in sports sponsorship are sustained by a multifaceted set of societal (Bareket and Fiske 2023; Eisend 2010; Ellemers 2018), organizational (Anderson 2009; Chizema, Kamuriwo, and Shinozawa 2015; Koenig et al. 2011), and media-related forces (Cornwell, Pruitt, and Clark 2005; Fink 2015; Meenaghan 2001). A critical evaluation of these

factors highlights how deeply ingrained stereotypes and structural biases continue to shape the commercial landscape, often to the detriment of female athletes and women's sports.

However, recent developments suggest a shift in public interest and commercial appeal for women's sports. For example, the 16% increase in average viewing time, along with record-breaking broadcast reach, reflects a broader shift towards greater audience engagement. Digital platforms have also played a significant role in this growth, as demonstrated by the FIFA Women's World Cup streaming numbers, which saw a 75% increase compared to the 2019 event (Women's Sport Trust 2024). This data indicates a growing demand for women's sports content across multiple platforms, suggesting that traditional perceptions of women's sports as less marketable are increasingly outdated.

Despite these positive trends, women's sports still face significant hurdles. While the data on increased viewership and attendance at women's sports events suggests a more engaged and expanding audience, there remains a substantial gap in commercial sponsorship when compared to men's sports (see 3.1). This research suggests that persistent stereotypes and traditional views of femininity and athleticism continue to influence how female athletes and women's sports are marketed (Ellemers 2018, p. 284 ; Messner, Duncan, and Jensen 1993, p. 125; Sherry, Osborne, and Nicholson 2016, p. 301).

Contrary to the traditional marketing approach, which often emphasizes "gender-appropriate" portrayals (Sherry, Osborne, and Nicholson 2016, p. 301) studies by Fink, Cunningham, and Kensicki (2004, p. 263), Kane and Maxwell (2011, p. 214) as well as Harrison and Lynch (2005, p. 233) found that focusing on a female athlete's expertise and prowess generates more interest than sexualized portrayals emphasizing physical attractiveness. Napoli, Nicholls, and Ouschan (2024, p. 88) emphasized that while sponsors often highlight "masculine" traits like competitiveness in sports, their messaging strategy - meaning their approach to communicating brand values and goals through language and imagery - tends to

emphasize "feminine" values such as community-building and gender equality rather than focusing on competitive, aggressive, or purely performance-based elements traditionally associated with "masculine" sports traits. It was argued that this strategic approach is likely intended to enhance the brand's image as ethical and socially responsible, rather than to reinforce female gender stereotypes. However, should sponsors adopt a communication strategy that emphasizes traditional feminine traits, they may be accused of failing to advance gender equity in sports. Conversely, by celebrating the traditionally masculine traits of female athletes, sponsors risk devaluing traditionally feminine qualities and reinforcing the traditional masculine norm (Napoli, Nicholls, and Ouschan 2024, p. 88)

These complex dynamics in sponsorship strategies and their potential impacts on gender perceptions in sports underscore the need for a thoughtful approach to marketing women's athletics. As the landscape of women's sports continues to evolve, it is instructive to examine specific cases that illustrate both the progress made and the challenges that persist.

A notable example of shifting dynamics is the rise of the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), which, as of 2024, has become the second most popular women's professional sports league (CivicScience 2024). It was also projected to be the second most valuable sport in terms of revenue, with US$354 million (28% of the overall market share) (Haskel et al. 2023), and saw a 7% increase in sponsorships, surpassing 500 deals for the first time (Sponsor United 2024).

Supporting women's sports offers both commercial opportunities and broader social benefits, helping to set new standards for gender equality that extend into areas such as accessible education through scholarships and expanded career opportunities (Lemmon 2019, p. 247-248). In doing so, professional women's sports also challenge gender norms and redefine femininity and equality by presenting powerful and diverse role models (NSW Government 2019, p. 5).

4.2 Managerial Implications

From a business standpoint, sponsoring sports is an efficient method to boost brand visibility. It works by associating the brand with the values and perceptions linked to the sponsored organization, making it easier for consumers to connect with the brand without requiring much cognitive processing (Mazodier and Merunka 2012, p. 808). This approach is particularly successful when consumers can identify closely with the sponsored entity, making it essential to assess how well the target audience relates to a potential sponsorship (Kim, Barasz, and John 2019, p. 421).

However, as highlighted in this seminar paper and other relevant studies, there remain significant disparities in sponsorship support between male and female athletes. Although traditional sponsorship strategies have historically favoured male-dominated sports, recent trends indicate that there is untapped potential within women's sports that managers should leverage (Women's Sport Trust 2024). The growing viewership and engagement across multiple platforms indicate a shift in consumer interest. The increased digital consumption of events such as the FIFA Women's World Cup and the growth of leagues including the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) (see 3.1) demonstrate the expanding audience for women's sports. This trend indicates that women's sports have developed into a market with significant investment potential. Moreover, a survey on public opinion regarding brands engaging in sports sponsorship in the UK in 2023 reflects the opinion that women's sports should receive greater sponsorship at all levels, including grassroots initiatives, major international events, and professional teams (Strive, & Women's Sport Trust 2023). Thus, managers should consider re-evaluating their sponsorship portfolios.

Furthermore, it is essential for companies to actively support female athletes from the grassroots level rather than merely aligning with high-profile global events or social media movements. Sustainable growth in the sector depends on nurturing young female talents and

building a solid base of female sports fans. By promoting female athletes to the same stature as their male counterparts, companies not only contribute to the sport's overall development but also enhance their reputation as advocates for empowerment and change (Statista 2024).

As highlighted in this research, traditional marketing strategies have often focused on portraying female athletes in ways that emphasize their femininity. This approach has been based on the assumption that it is the most effective method for generating interest and increasing viewership (Kane and Buysse 2005, p. 232; Kane and Maxwell 2011, p. 204). However, given the significant success of women's basketball and football, as well as empirical evidence showing that consumers' attitudes are more positively influenced by an athlete's expertise rather than her physical appearance (Fink, Cunningham, and Kensicki 2004, p. 363), it is clear that this traditional approach is outdated. Therefore, managers should shift their strategies to highlight the skills and competitive strengths of female athletes, focusing on their achievements and abilities rather than reinforcing outdated gender stereotypes.

Lastly, the level of media coverage that women's sports receive is a critical factor influencing sponsorship decisions. The limited visibility (Cooky et al. 2021, p. 253) has historically led to fewer sponsorship opportunities, as sponsors are often risk-averse and prefer proven properties with high media reach (see Chapters 3.2.3 and 3.2.4) (Meenaghan 1983, p. 35; Shaw and Amis 2001, p. 241). To address this, managers should collaborate closely with media outlets to ensure more comprehensive coverage and engaging storytelling around women's sports. Co-investing in marketing campaigns could amplify these efforts, enhancing the visibility of female athletes and boosting the overall value of sponsorships through greater brand exposure.

4.3 Limitations and Future Research

This section addresses the limitations inherent in this research, identifying areas where future exploration could strengthen and expand the study's relevance and accuracy. One primary limitation is the reliance on older literature, which may no longer fully represent today's societal dynamics or perspectives. For example, foundational arguments in this review, particularly the concept of "sex-appropriate" sports (Kane 1988, p. 97) and sponsorship trends (Meenaghan 1983; Messner, Duncan, and Jensen 1993), are based on studies conducted decades ago. These studies were instrumental in shaping early discourse but may not capture current attitudes or the evolving landscape of gender representation in sports. Future research would benefit from revisiting these foundational concepts with contemporary empirical studies to assess whether these theories hold in today's context.

Another challenge is the lack of A+ or A-rated marketing journals focusing specifically on sports, necessitating reliance on sports-specific literature, where journal ratings are often unknown. While valuable, many of these sources are literature reviews rather than empirical studies, limiting the strength of the evidence presented. To address this, future research should aim to conduct empirical investigations, particularly within highly rated marketing journals, to add robust, data-driven insights to the discourse on gender disparities in sports sponsorship. This would help to provide up-to-date, reliable findings that could be more broadly applied to contemporary sponsorship and marketing strategies

It is also important to consider the generalizability of the findings, given that a significant proportion of the data and examples used in this paper are drawn primarily from U.S.-based sports leagues (e.g., the WNBA and LPGA). Although these examples offer valuable insights into gender disparities in sponsorship within the U.S. market, it is important to note that the findings may not be fully applicable to other geographical regions, such as Europe, Asia, or South America, where sports culture, audience preferences, and sponsorship structures

can differ substantially. Thus, comparative studies could provide a more nuanced understanding of how regional factors - such as cultural perceptions of gender roles, media representation, and corporate sponsorship trends - affect the sponsorship landscape for female athletes globally.

Another limitation of this review is its omission of social media's impact on sponsorship. As traditional metrics like TV reach become less relevant - given the drop in live sports viewership and the older demographic of remaining TV audiences - social media has become essential in sponsorship strategies (NSW Government 2019). Women's sports audiences are younger and highly active online, providing a valuable opportunity for marketers to focus on digital engagement (Statista 2020). Therefore, future research should examine how social media metrics shape sponsorship value in women's sports.

Lastly, it is important to consider that the sponsorship comparison among the LPGA, WTA, and WNBA may not fully reflect individual sponsorship deals, which are a significant income source for top female athletes (Haskel et al. 2023). High-profile athletes like Serena Williams and Naomi Osaka, for example, attract substantial individual sponsorships due to their strong personal brand value and global appeal, often surpassing team-based sponsorship earnings (Statista 2020). Thus, for future research, it would be key to differentiate within women's sports between Individual sports and Team sports, and further evaluate the insights found

Appendix

Table A1: Means, Standard Deviations, and Bivariate Correlations (Fink, Cunningham, and Kensicki 2004, p. 259)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. School A	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2. School B	−.52***	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
3. Age	.28***	−.20**	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
4. Race	−.08	−.05	.11	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
5. Attractiveness	−.01	−.04	.13	−.06	—	—	—	—	—	—
6. Expertise	−.08	−.03	.14	−.05	.12	—	—	—	—	—
7. Fit	.16*	−.21**	.12	−.21**	.42***	.57***	—	—	—	—
8. Attitudes	.29***	−.22**	.17*	−.12	.32***	.37***	.52***	—	—	—
9. Intentions	.19*	−.21**	.13	−.05	.38***	.35***	.48***	.67***	—	—
10. Identification	.13	−.34***	.13	.22**	.04	.08	.17*	.13	.18*	—
Mean	.35	.34	20.04	.81	5.08	5.99	4.70	5.22	3.11	6.22
SD	.48	.48	1.80	.40	2.56	1.93	2.34	1.74	1.97	2.13

Note. $*p < .05$. $**p < .01$. $***p < .001$.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that the effects of athlete expertise on perceptions of athlete-event fit would be stronger than the effects of athlete attractiveness. Results indicate that the correlation between expertise and fit was significantly stronger than the correlation between attractiveness and fit ($t = 2.46$, $p < .05$). Thus, hypothesis 2 was also supported

Figure A2: Overall Impact of Image on Interest in Reading about and Watching on TV (Kane and Maxwell 2011, p. 210)
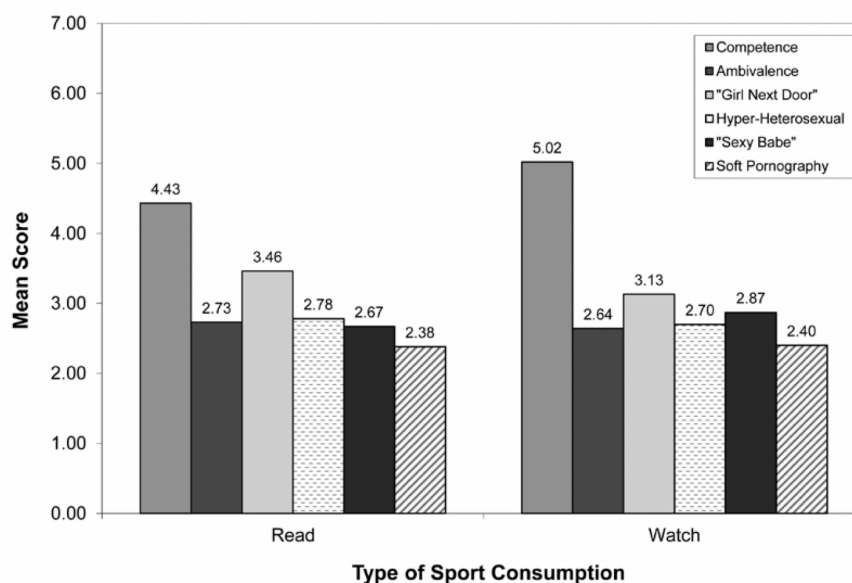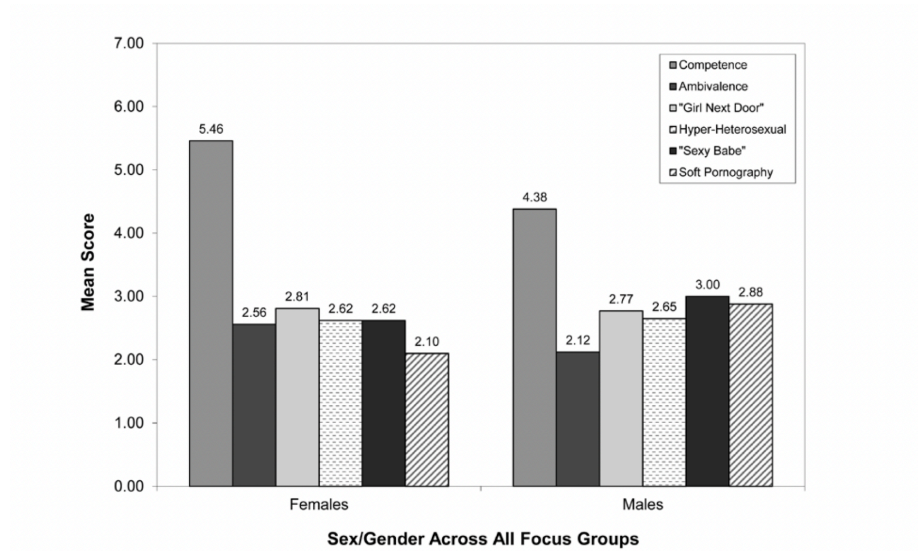
Figure A3: Impact of Image on Interest in Attending Event by Sex/Gender of Respondent (Kane and Maxwell 2011, p. 211)

Consistent with the findings reported above, both female and male respondents were significantly more interested in attending events after viewing the image of athletic competence

Table A4: Correlation Analysis (Eisend 2010, p. 434)

	Correlations with GEM							
	Full data set[a]					Reduced data set		
	r	k[b]	n[c]	R^2-linear[d]	R^2-non-linear[d]	r	k	n
minus 3 years	−.286***	30	186	.082	.098	−.217*	20	124
minus 2 years	−.258***	29	177	.066	.082	−.184*	20	124
minus 1 year	−.196**	30	180	.038	.054	−.176*	20	124
same year	−.131[#]	33	190	.017	.036	−.161[+]	20	124
plus 1 year	−.027	32	180	.001	.008	−.168[+]	20	124
plus 2 years	−.014	29	171	.001	.001	−.130	20	124
plus 3 years	−.023	27	159	.001	.009	−.128	20	124

Correlations between GSA (average log odds ratios of all gender role variables per study) and GEM index values. To take into account the varying number of log odds from a study, frequency weights were applied

[a] The full data set considers all available GEM indices, whereas the reduced data set considers only data when index values are available for all 7 years

[b] k refers to the number of studies

[c] n refers to the frequency of log odds

[d] Non-linear relationships were tested by a quadratic curve

[#] $p<.10$ *$p<.05$. **$p<.01$. ***$p<.001$

GSA: The degree of gender stereotyping in advertising

GEM: Gender Empowerment Measure

The significant correlations between past GEM values (minus 3, minus 2, and minus 1 years) and GSA indicate that societal values related to gender equality tend to influence advertising rather than vice versa. This pattern is consistent with the "mirror" theory, suggesting that advertising reflects existing societal values rather than molding or changing them.

Table A5: A List of Sports Coded as Either Sex-Appropriate or Sex-Inappropriate for Female Sport Participation (Kane 1988, p. 92)

Sex-appropriate sports	Sex-inappropriate sports
Cycling	Baseball
Diving	Basketball
Field hockey	Biathlon
Golf	Body building
Gymnastics	Crew
Horseback riding (jumping/showing)	Curling
Racquetball	Fencing
Skating (figure)	Field (javelin)
Skating (speed)	Judo
Skiing (downhill)	Pool (shooting)
Skiing (water)	Racing (car/drag)
Surfing	Racing (dogsled)
Swimming	Racing (horse)
Synchronized swimming	Racing (speedboat)
Tennis	Rifle shooting
Track (running)	Roller derby
Volleyball	Softball
	Stone throwing
	Weightlifting
	Wrestling

Table A6: Multiple Meta-Regressions for the Think Manager–Think Male Paradigm (Koenig et al. 2011, p. 633)

Variable and class	Women–leaders similarity			Men–leaders similarity		
	b	β	p	b	β	p
Year of publication	0.01	0.47	<.001	−0.00	−0.05	.75
% Male participants	−0.00	−0.27	.03	0.00	0.07	.62
Leader status	−0.11	−0.10	.37	0.49	0.43	.002
Participant nationality	−0.11	−0.13	.27	0.17	0.19	.18
Participant age	0.01	0.47	.001	0.00	0.02	.90
% Male authors	−0.00	−0.13	.31	−0.00	−0.02	.91

Note. Models are random-effects weighted linear regressions calculated with weights equal to the reciprocal of the variance for each effect size plus a random-effects component. b = unstandardized regression coefficient; β = standardized regression coefficient; p = probability. k = 48 for women–leaders similarity and k = 50 for men–leaders similarity. Codes were as follows: leader status: 1 = high, 0 = moderate; participant nationality: 1 = Eastern, 0 = Western.

Table A7: Meta-Regressions for the Masculinity–Femininity Paradigm (Koenig et al. 2011, p. 635)

Predictor	k	Simple meta-regressions			Multiple meta-regression		
		b	β	p	b	β	p
Year of publication	101	−0.06	−0.42	<.001	−0.05	−0.39	<.001
% Male participants	101	0.08	0.22	.01	−0.01	−0.02	.85
Leader domain	101				1.17	0.36	<.001
Leader status	101				1.20	0.30	<.001
% Female managers	101	−0.02	−0.16	.06	0.00	0.00	.98
% Male authors	101	−0.01	−0.19	.02	−0.00	−0.02	.76

Note. Models are random-effects weighted linear regressions calculated with weights equal to the reciprocal of the variance for each effect size plus a random-effects component. Blank cells indicate data that were not applicable to that analysis. k = number of samples; b = unstandardized regression coefficient; β = standardized regression coefficient; p = probability. Codings were as follows: leader domain: 1 = judicial and other, 0 = education, business, arts, and political; leader status: 1 = high, 0 = moderate.

Literature Review Table

Author/ Year	Journal (Ranking)	Research Focus	Theoretical Background	Sample	Method	Limitations	Main Findings
Ellemers/ 2018	Annual Review of Psychology (**A**)	Investigates the nature, impact, and persistence of gender stereotypes, exploring how they shape social interactions, career outcomes, and self-perception.	Gender stereotypes are addressed as influential cognitive frameworks that persist in society, affecting attitudes and actions through deeply ingrained societal and cultural norms.	/	Literature Review	/	Gender stereotypes affect judgments, memory, and behavior across domains, perpetuating biases that shape individuals' perceptions of self and others, often hindering social equity efforts.
Eisend/ 2010	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (**A**)	This meta-analysis investigates gender role portrayals in advertising, examining the extent of stereotyping, changes over time, and its relation to societal shifts in gender roles.	The study contrasts the "mirror" hypothesis (advertising reflects societal values) and "mold" hypothesis (advertising shapes societal values).	64 studies analyzing gender roles in TV and radio advertising	Meta-analysis	Potential cultural biases and the use of older studies that may not capture current social dynamics.	Findings indicate that stereotyping has decreased over time but mostly in high-masculinity cultures. Moreover, advertising reflects societal gender-related values more than it shapes them, supporting the "mirror" argument.
Bosak, Sczesny, and Eagly / 2012	Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin	Examines how social roles influence gender trait judgments, analyzing whether observed role occupants' traits impact gender stereotypes	Compares Social Role Theory, which posits roles shape trait judgments, with the Shifting Standards Model, suggesting standards adjust within gender groups.	Experiment 1: 111 male, 120 female, and 5 unknown sex participants Experiment 2: 177 male, 194 female, and 3 unknown sex participants	Subjective and objective scales to rate agentic and communal traits across varied occupational roles and genders	/	Results supported Social Role Theory: gendered trait judgments lessen when role information is provided, suggesting social roles influence stereotype reduction rather than shifting standards
Koenig and Eagly/ 2005	Sex Roles	Provides evidence of stereotype threat in men on a test of a feminine ability called social	The authors base their study on stereotype threat theory, which posits that awareness of negative stereotypes can impair	52 men and 61 women from a U.S.-based university	Participants were assigned randomly to either a stereotype-threat condition (where they were told women	Relied on self-reported strategy use which may limit the generalizability	Men under stereotype threat (were told women perform better in the test) performed worse on social sensitivity tasks, especially when using

		sensitivity, that is, the ability to decode nonverbal cues.	performance in domains associated with those stereotypes.		excel in social sensitivity) or a control condition. Performance on a social sensitivity test was measured, with moderating effects of self-reported strategies assessed.		deliberative rather than intuitive strategies. This finding suggests that stereotype threat consumes cognitive resources, which impairs performance in tasks requiring deliberative processing.
Harrison and Lynch/ 2005	Sex Roles	Examines how athletic roles influence perceived gender role orientations of male and female athletes, particularly when they participate in sports deemed either "feminine" (cheerleading) or "masculine" (football, basketball).	The study applies *Social Role Theory*, suggesting that society assigns gendered expectations based on historical divisions of labor, with roles reinforcing communal traits for women and agentic traits for men.	148 university students	Participants read fictional articles describing male or female athletes in gender-conforming or non-conforming sports, then rated the athletes on agency (masculine traits) and communality (feminine traits) using the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) and other measures to assess athlete motivation and approval	Only a few sports were investigated (cheerleading, football, and basketball), Sample consisted only of university students	Athletic roles, rather than gender alone, significantly influence perceived gender role orientations. Female athletes in masculine sports (football and basketball) were viewed as more agentic, while male athletes in feminine roles (cheerleading) were perceived as more communal. Contrary to expectations, female athletes in non-traditional roles received higher approval, revealing nuanced perceptions of gender in athletics that challenge some conventional stereotypes
Messner, Duncan, and Jensen/ 1993	Gender & Society	Investigates how televised sports commentators use gendered language, analyzing how linguistic differences reinforce gender stereotypes in sports and portray male athletes as inherently superior.	Grounded in feminist and media studies, the paper applies gender role theory, exploring how media perpetuates cultural norms by associating masculinity with strength and competence, while framing femininity as secondary.	Draws from a set of televised sports events, focusing on broadcasts that include both male and female sports.	Content analysis is used to examine language in sports commentary, quantifying the differences in descriptors applied to male versus female athletes to identify patterns of gendered language.	/	Male athletes are often described using terms emphasizing power and skill, whereas female athletes receive comments that highlight appearance or emotion. The study concludes that these linguistic patterns contribute to broader societal gender biases.
Kane and Maxwell/ 2011	Journal of Sport Management	Examines how gendered media representations affect consumer perceptions of	Critiques how media coverage reinforces gendered power dynamics, particularly the "sex sells" assumption. It suggests	12 focus groups with 63 participants	Audience Reception Research: combining both qualitative and quantitative measures to assess reactions to	geographic limitation (only Midwest)	The research found that images emphasizing athletic skill generate higher consumer interest in women's sports. Sexualized representations had

		women's sports, specifically focusing on the assumption that "sex sells" for promoting female athletes.	that promoting athletic competence is more effective than sexualized portrayals		different representations of female athletes	low appeal and created backlash, especially among women and older males, challenging the "sex sells" belief for promoting women's sports
Fink, Cunningham, and Kensickis/ 2004	Journal of Sport Management	The study investigates how athlete endorsers' attractiveness and expertise impact event promotion and ticket-purchase intent.	Draws from the match-up hypothesis and associative learning theory. These theories suggest that the compatibility of an endorser's attributes with a product can influence consumer perception and that associations formed between a credible athlete and the event enhance consumer attitudes and intentions	173 students	Experimental 2x2 design was applied, manipulating attractiveness and expertise in ad conditions. After viewing the ads, participants completed a questionnaire to measure perceptions of fit, attitudes, and purchase intentions. Analysis included multivariate regressions to explore relationships between attractiveness/expertise and consumer response.	Fictional athlete and event reduce the study's external validity, focused on softball - a less popular and "sex-inappropriate" sport	The study found that while both attractiveness and expertise positively affected consumer perception, expertise had a stronger influence on event fit, favorable attitudes, and ticket-purchase intentions. Identification with the team also moderated this effect. This suggests that promoting skill over attractiveness in female athletes could better drive consumer engagement in women's sports.

Cooky, Council, Mears and Messner/ 2021	Communication & Sport	Investigates the longitudinal trends in the media coverage of women's sports on televised broadcasts, spanning three decades from 1989 to 2019. It examines the quantity, quality, and type of coverage women's sports receive compared to men's sports	Framed around the concept of gender inequality in sports media, exploring how deeply ingrained societal norms and media practices perpetuate disparities. The study references critical feminist theory, particularly the notion that media perpetuates gendered perceptions, impacting societal norms and sustaining inequity in sports representation.	Sample consists of recorded sports segments from local Los Angeles network affiliates (KCBS, KNBC, KABC) at 6 p.m. and 11 p.m., as well as from ESPN's SportsCenter. These segments were collected in selected timeframes across several years (1989, 1993, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019)	Both quantitative and qualitative content analysis.	Doesn't capture shifts in coverage on newer media platforms like streaming and social media. Only focused on Los Angeles networks and ESPN's SportsCenter,	The study reveals that women's sports have consistently received minimal coverage compared to men's sports, with less than 5% of air time dedicated to women's events in some years. Additionally, the quality of coverage for women's sports was often less enthusiastic, with commentators using less exciting language and fewer visual enhancements than those for men's sports.
Holbrook/ 1987	Journal of Marketing (A+)	Examines Pollay's 1986 critique of advertising's unintended societal consequences and Holbrook addresses whether advertising simply mirrors societal values or actively molds them.	Explores the "mirror vs. mold" debate: whether advertising merely reflects existing societal values or shapes them to foster consumerism and reinforce negative stereotypes.	/	Holbrook employs a critical, argumentative approach, systematically dissecting Pollay's claims and presenting counterpoints.	Limited by its lack of empirical data; it is a conceptual rebuttal rather than a data-driven study.	Holbrook concludes that Pollay's arguments about advertising as a societal mirror are overly simplistic. Holbrook suggests that while some advertisements may reinforce materialistic values, the ad industry as a whole does not have a unified agenda to manipulate societal values.
Pollay/ 1986	Journal of Marketing (A+)	Centers on the societal and cultural impacts of advertising, examining unintended consequences that arise from pervasive advertising practices. It aims to	The paper builds on theoretical insights from sociology, psychology, anthropology, and consumer behavior to argue that advertising operates as an environmental force that shapes public consciousness.	/	Literature review and conceptual analysis	Reliance on prior literature and a lack of empirical data directly linking advertising to the societal issues discussed	Pollay argues that advertising cultivates a consumer-driven worldview, reinforcing materialistic values, unrealistic social standards, and even self-doubt in consumers. Advertising's omnipresence and strategic messaging are suggested to manipulate social values and foster negative psychological effects, such as

		outline how advertising influences individual values, societal norms					increased envy and decreased self-esteem
Cornwell and Kwon/ 2020	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (**A**)	Reviews sponsorship-linked marketing from 1996 to 2017, assessing areas with extensive research (surpluses) and those lacking sufficient investigation (shortages).	Ecosystem perspective to model sponsorship, emphasizing interconnectedness, boundedness, and dynamism within sponsorship relationships. They apply Mitleton-Kelly's social ecosystem theory, which considers the sponsor and sponsee as mutually influential	Study analyzes a collection of 409 articles from reputable journals within the Journal Citation Reports database	Systematic review approach, the authors compiled and categorized 1161 articles, ultimately focusing on three categories: management and strategy in sponsorship processes, effectiveness measurements, and trends in sponsorship research.	focus, scope, and organization. Focus: This review considered sponsorship of any property, thus research on sports, arts, entertainment, and charity Scope: Only the articles appearing in the WS-JCR, led to the exclusion of niche journals with low citation rate Organization: Used sponsoring process model to highlight the management of sponsorship as under researched.	The analysis highlights a need for further research in sponsorship management, particularly around pricing, contract negotiation, and relationship dynamics. Findings suggest that while consumer response to sponsorship is well-documented, understanding the complete sponsorship ecosystem requires examining both sponsor and sponsee processes and exploring metrics beyond media exposure, including engagement ecosystems and brand equity outcomes
Cornwell, Weeks, and Roy/ 2005	Journal of Advertising (**B**)	Investigates the mechanisms underlying sponsorship-linked marketing. It aims to explore how sponsorships affect consumer attitudes, awareness, and behaviors,	The study builds on associative memory models and theoretical frameworks around consumer behavior in advertising. The authors draw from theories like classical conditioning, social identity theory, and balance theory, focusing	/	A conceptual model is constructed, synthesizing existing literature on sponsorship-linked marketing to examine cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes. The model considers individual,	Reliance on existing studies without fresh empirical data	The authors conclude that sponsorship effectiveness is influenced by factors such as congruence between sponsor and sponsored event, exposure frequency, and consumer identification with the brand or cause. The model also suggests that mere exposure can improve brand favorability without the

		analyzing how factors like memory and information processing influence sponsorship effectiveness	on how sponsorship influences brand knowledge		market, and managerial factors, and proposes mechanisms - such as mere exposure, low-level processing, and congruence - that affect consumer processing of sponsorship messages		consumer's active awareness, especially in low-involvement contexts
Speed and Thompson/ 2000	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (**A**)	Focuses on identifying key factors influencing consumer responses to sports sponsorship. It explores how consumer attitudes toward the sponsored event, the sponsor, and the perceived sponsor-event fit affect sponsorship outcomes.	The research uses classical conditioning theory, positing that a positive consumer response to a sponsorship arises from favorable associations with the sponsored event and sponsor	195 undergraduate and postgraduate students from Australia	Survey method where participants evaluated fictitious sponsorship scenarios involving real companies and events. Statistical techniques included regression analyses and residual centering to test the effects and interactions among variables	Controlled, single exposure to sponsorship scenarios, multi-exposure conditions, Student sample may limit the findings' applicability across broader populations,the use of real companies could introduce biases based on respondents' existing brand familiarity and perceptions.	The study finds that sponsorship effectiveness depends significantly on sponsor-event fit, perceived sponsor sincerity, and consumer attitudes toward the sponsor. Sponsor-event fit enhances consumer response, especially when consumers have a strong personal liking for the event.
Meenaghan /2001	Psychology & Marketing (**B**)	Explores the impact of sponsorship on consumer perceptions, particularly the ways sponsorship creates brand goodwill, enables image transfer, and engages fans through emotional connections with sponsored activities.	Integrates concepts from marketing communications, consumer psychology, and sociology. It discusses consumer goodwill, fan involvement, and image transfer as core tenets, suggesting that sponsorship is uniquely positioned to create affective responses due to its subtle, indirect engagement with	Qualitative data drawn from focus groups, including fans with varying degrees of involvement with sports and the arts	A qualitative approach using focus groups and in-depth interviews with industry experts was employed to capture consumer perceptions and explore industry insights	Centers mainly on event sponsorship rather than broadcast sponsorship, focus groups are context-specific and may not reflect broader consumer attitudes	The study proposes that sponsorship generates unique consumer goodwill due to its perceived societal benefit and less overt commercial intent compared to traditional ads. The intensity of fan involvement is pivotal, influencing image transfer and loyalty. Fans who feel a strong connection to the sponsored activity are more likely to perceive the brand favorably and show purchase intent.

					consumers compared to traditional advertising.		
Mazodier and Merunka/ 2012	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (**A**)	investigates the relationship between sponsorship and brand loyalty, specifically how brand-event fit and self-congruity with the event influence consumers' loyalty to the sponsor's brand.	Builds on theories of brand loyalty, sponsorship-linked marketing, and consumer-brand relationships, integrating concepts from self-congruity theory and affective transfer. These concepts help explain how sponsorship creates a connection between consumers and brands by fostering identification with the sponsored event	Sample of 449 participants, primarily through convenience sampling	An experimental design was used with pre- and post-sponsorship exposure measurements. Participants were divided into experimental groups exposed to real advertisements from Adidas and Samsung during the 2008 Olympics, and a control group not exposed to these sponsor ads. The study assessed brand affect, brand trust, and brand loyalty across multiple stages to observe changes driven by sponsorship exposure.	Quasi-experimental nature of the study, which may introduce biases from uncontrolled external factors	The study found that sponsorship positively impacts brand affect, brand trust, and brand loyalty, especially when there is a strong perceived fit between the brand and event, and when consumers experience self-congruity with the event. Both fit and self-congruity were shown to facilitate positive attitudes toward the brand and emotional attachment, suggesting that sponsorship is an effective tool for building long-term brand loyalty.
Olson and Mathias Thjømø/ 2009	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (**A**)	Focuses on developing a metric to assess the financial value of sponsorship by comparing sponsorship effects with traditional television advertising.	The study is grounded in marketing communication theory, with a particular focus on the "mere exposure effect" and brand awareness principles. It also examines the notion of "sponsorship activation" through advertising, which posits that sponsorships require additional promotional support to maximize impact	2333 Norwegian citizens representing the overall target market populations of the sponsors in the Norway	Study 1 involves creating realistic short films of handball game highlights with sponsor logos and advertising inserts, comparing sponsorship exposure time with a 30-second TV spot. Study 2 combines sponsorship exposure with TV advertising to assess potential synergy effects. Metrics include brand recognition, liking, and purchase intentions.	Use of Norwegian data, potential differences in brand recall due to ad quality were not fully explored.	The research finds that approximately 127 seconds of sponsorship exposure achieves equivalent recognition to a 30-second TV spot, though effectiveness varies widely based on brand familiarity and fit. Sponsorship combined with TV advertising yields a synergy effect, improving brand recall and purchase intentions, especially for less familiar brands.

					The experiments use a mixed-method design involving both quantitative measurement and qualitative feedback from a media panel.	
Kim, Lee, Magnusen and Kim/ 2015	Journal of Sport Management	Aims to understand sponsorship effectiveness through a meta-analysis, examining various factors that influence the outcomes of sponsorship initiatives.	The study integrates theories like schema theory, which relates to consumers' cognitive processing based on sponsor-property "fit," gratitude theory that underpins affective responses, and behavioral intention theory relevant to conative outcomes.	The meta-analysis synthesizes data from 154 studies, drawing from 164 independent samples with a total of 58,469 participants	Meta-analysis	Potential variations due to methodological diversity in the included studies, predominance of English-language studies, use of both real and fictitious brands	Key findings show that "fit" and "involvement" are critical antecedents to sponsorship effectiveness. For instance, fit between sponsor and property strongly influences affective and behavioral outcomes, while involvement is a primary predictor of behavioral outcomes. The analysis reveals that both sponsorship type and methodological characteristics significantly moderate sponsorship effectiveness,
Cornwell, Pruitt, and Clark/ 2005	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (**A**)	Examines the financial impact of official sponsorship announcements by major sports leagues (NFL, MLB, NBA, NHL, and PGA) on the stock prices of sponsoring firms. Specifically, it investigates whether these sponsorships yield a positive effect on shareholder wealth.	Gounded in theories of sponsorship-linked marketing, emphasizing that such sponsorships serve as signals to investors and the public about a firm's brand association and corporate value.	53 official sponsorship announcements across five major sports leagues, focusing on firms sponsoring as "official product" partners	The study utilizes an event study methodology to calculate abnormal returns on stock prices around sponsorship announcement dates.	Lack of available sponsorship cost data, focuses only on official product sponsorships, U.S.-centric sample	The study finds that official sponsorships, on average, positively influence stock prices, with significant returns evident around the announcement dates. Sponsorships by high-tech companies and those with a high congruence with the sport show the strongest positive effects.
Yazdanparast and Bayar/ 2021	Journal of Advertising (**B**)	The study investigates the effects of Olympic	The paper leverages "meaning transfer theory," suggesting that	166 global firms across 26 industries,	The paper employs a "fixed-effects model" and a "two-step	Reliance on annual brand value data, which	The study finds that Olympic sponsorships positively influence brand value over time,

		sponsorship on brand valuations, particularly how high-profile Olympic partnerships influence brand value over time.	sponsorships allow brands to absorb the positive associations of the Olympics (such as unity and prestige), subsequently boosting brand image and value	observed over a 16-year period from 2000 to 2016, covering nine Olympic Games events.	treatment model" to address potential endogeneity in sponsorship selection	may not capture immediate, short-term sponsorship effects, limited to brands listed in global rankings	especially for sponsors associated with the summer games. This effect appears to support brand maintenance rather than short-term gains. The results indicate a favorable, lasting impact on brand value through association with the Olympics, supporting the hypothesis that such sponsorships enhance long-term brand equity.
Cooky, Messner, Hextrum/ 2013	Communication & Sport	Examines the quantity and nature of televised media coverage of women's sports versus men's, analyzing Los Angeles network news and ESPN's SportsCenter over several years to understand if media coverage shapes or simply reflects audience interest.	Rooted in theories of "symbolic annihilation" and hegemonic masculinity, the study argues that media coverage reinforces sports as a male domain by prioritizing men's sports while marginalizing or trivializing women's sports.	Sports segments of three Los Angeles news networks and ESPN's SportsCenter, spanning six weeks across different sports seasons (March, July, and November)	Using content analysis, the study quantifies airtime and production elements for men's versus women's sports, and qualitatively assesses the tone and respectfulness of women's sports coverage.	Geographic and platform focus on Los Angeles and ESPN, lack of insights into producer motivations and audience perspectives	Women's sports coverage remains minimal, often relegated to brief or ticker mentions, comprising only 1.6% of airtime in 2009—the lowest in two decades. This imbalance, coupled with often trivializing portrayals, suggests that media not only reflects but constructs audience interest, reinforcing gender biases by sustaining focus on men's sports.
Shaw and Amis/ 2001	Journal of Sport Management	Explores the relationship between sponsorship and women's sports, focusing on how corporate sponsorship and media portrayal affect the public image and financial viability of women's sports.	The authors discuss how sponsorship of women's sports is shaped by corporate interests and cultural views on gender, suggesting that limited sponsorship reinforces stereotypes by often emphasizing femininity over athletic prowess.	/	2 case studies	Qualitative nature limits the generalizability of findings across all women's sports.	The study concludes that women's sports receive disproportionately less sponsorship and are often marketed in ways that reinforce traditional gender roles. This lack of financial support and narrow portrayal contributes to limited visibility and economic viability, constraining the growth and recognition of women's sports.

Fink/ 2015	Sport Management Review	Reviews the underrepresentation and portrayal of female athletes in media, particularly within the "sport-media-commercial complex."	Grounded in theories of hegemonic masculinity, the study discusses how media coverage supports male dominance by prioritizing men's sports and trivializing women's. It highlights concepts like "symbolic annihilation" and explores how marketing strategies often focus on female athletes' appearance over athletic ability.	/	Literature Review	Does not conduct new empirical analysis, mainly covers North American media.	The study finds that female athletes receive limited and often sexualized media coverage, reinforcing gender stereotypes. This skewed coverage affects public perceptions, potentially reducing interest and investment in women's sports.
Kane/ 1988	Journal of Sport Management	This study examines how Title IX influenced media portrayals of female athletes in *Sports Illustrated*, exploring whether coverage shifted from negative stereotypes to a more socially accepting view of women in sports over three periods: before, during, and after Title IX (1964–1987).	Grounded in theories of gender-specific sport participation, focusing on how sports have traditionally emphasized masculinity, creating stereotypes that deem competitive sports as unfeminine. Title IX's role is seen as potentially reshaping these cultural attitudes and media portrayals of women in sports.	1,228 issues of *Sports Illustrated* from 1964 to 1987	Content analysis, the study assesses the number and nature of feature articles on female athletes, Chi-square tests to determine if coverage patterns shifted in alignment with Title IX's timeline.	Study focuses solely on *Sports Illustrated* and non-competitive feature articles,	The findings indicate a significant increase in coverage of female athletes in athletic roles after Title IX, though the emphasis remains predominantly on "sex-appropriate" sports like tennis and golf. This trend suggests that while Title IX led to some positive changes, media portrayal of female athletes continued to be limited by traditional gender norms
Bareket and Fiske/ 2023	Psychological Bulletin (**top rated on Kickoff slides**)	Synthesizes findings on ambivalent sexism, specifically hostile sexism (HS) and benevolent sexism (BS), examining how they interact across domains	Based on Ambivalent Sexism Theory, the paper explores HS as a form of antagonism towards women perceived as threats to male authority, and BS as a more subtle, seemingly positive attitude that reinforces traditional roles. Together, they create a coordinated system that	The review analyzed 654 empirical studies	Systematic review methodology	Review's reliance on cross-sectional and correlational studies, western samples, which.	HS and BS consistently contribute to gender inequality but in distinct ways: HS enforces power dynamics through antagonism, while BS promotes compliance with traditional roles, often masking sexism under protective attitudes. Across contexts, both forms discourage resistance to gender norms, perpetuating stereotypes and inequality in

			maintains control over gender roles.				social ideologies, workplace, and relationships.
Napoli, Nicholls, and Ouschan/ 2024	Journal of Marketing Management **(C)**	Examines how sponsors of women's sports, particularly the Australian Football League Women's (AFLW), use gendered messaging that simultaneously challenges and reinforces gender stereotypes	Utilizing social role theory, the research highlights how sponsors communicate through traditionally feminine (communal) traits in setting sponsorship objectives while promoting masculine (agentic) traits when describing women athletes.	Communications from 74 AFLW sponsors, analyzing sponsor websites, social media, press releases, and reports to understand their messaging across platforms.	Qualitative and quantitative content analysis to identify gendered language, categorizing traits as masculine or feminine based on social role theory and assessing alignment with traditional female stereotypes.	Study's regional focus on Australia's AFLW, Data was collected within a specific time frame.	Sponsor communications often emphasize community-oriented goals (e.g., inclusivity, support for equality) associated with femininity, while descriptions of athletes emphasize masculine traits (e.g., strength, ambition). This paradox reflects a broader cultural tendency to value masculine qualities in sports, potentially reinforcing the notion that women must adopt these traits to be seen as legitimate athletes, which may inadvertently undervalue traditionally feminine qualities.
Chizema, Kamuriwo, and Shinozawa/ 2015	The Leadership Quarterly **(A)** (Personalwesen)	Investigates the social, economic, and cultural factors influencing the representation of women on corporate boards globally, exploring how institutions such as politics, economic freedom, and religiosity impact female board appointments.	Drawing on social role theory, the study posits that societal norm shape gender roles, with traditional roles often limiting women's access to leadership positions.	45 countries with data spanning from 2007 to 2013,	Two-stage least squares (2SLS) regression analysis	Secondary data, the institutional context of the study is limited to 45 countries, does not account for all cultural aspects	The study finds that women's representation in politics positively influences female board appointments, while high religiosity correlates with fewer women on boards. Economic development shows mixed results, suggesting that traditional cultural attitudes may persist even in developed economies.
Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, Ristikari/ 2011	Psychological Bulletin **(top rated on Kickoff slides)**	This meta-analysis investigates the cultural stereotype of leadership as masculine, examining whether leadership characteristics are	Grounded in role congruity theory, the study posits that cultural stereotypes often mismatch women with leadership roles, as leadership is frequently characterized by agentic, masculine traits.	The meta-analysis includes data from 78 studies across three research paradigms: (a) think manager– think male, (b)	Utilizing random and mixed effects models, the study calculates effect sizes across paradigms to measure the association between masculinity and leadership.	Not addressed *intersectionality,* whereby the role incongruity of women in relation to leadership may depend on other group	Across all paradigms, the meta-analysis confirms that leadership stereotypes are predominantly masculine, with men rated as more similar to leaders than women. However, this masculinity has decreased over time, and stereotypes are

		predominantly associated with masculinity across three research paradigms.		agency–communion, and (c) masculinity–femininity scales		memberships (e.g., race, ethnicity, sexual orientation) as well as their gender	less masculine in educational fields and lower-status roles. The findings suggest that while perceptions of leadership are evolving, traditional masculine biases persist, challenging women's access to and success in leadership positions.
Anderson/ 2009	Sport Management Review	Explores how masculinity is maintained and reinforced within sports institutions, focusing on how gender norms are preserved among stakeholders,	Drawing on hegemonic masculinity and feminist theories, the paper posits that sports serve as a "near-total institution," maintaining traditional gender roles through segregation, overrepresentation of men, and prioritization of hypermasculine ideals.	/	Literature Review	Is theoretical and lacks direct empirical data	Sports institutions actively reproduce masculine norms by promoting hypermasculine values, which limit diversity and reinforce male dominance. Gender segregation and socialization in sports promote an exclusive "boys' club" culture, resistant to change..
Meenaghan/ 1983	European Journal of Marketing (C)	Explores the role of commercial sponsorship within the marketing mix, analyzing how companies use sponsorship to achieve various marketing objectives, such as increasing brand awareness, enhancing corporate image, and engaging with specific audiences.	Builds on marketing communication theories, emphasizing sponsorship as a key element of the promotion mix. It discusses the "hierarchy of effects" model, illustrating how sponsorship contributes to consumer awareness, interest, and preference, aligning with broader marketing objectives.	/	This is a conceptual paper that synthesizes existing marketing literature	Reliance on theoretical models and case examples, focus on the UK sponsorship landscape	Sponsorship is identified as a versatile tool within the marketing mix, capable of achieving both direct and indirect objectives, such as enhancing brand image and fostering goodwill. However, effective sponsorship requires alignment with corporate goals and audience characteristics. The paper argues that sponsorship success depends on an integrated approach, where it complements other marketing efforts.
Sherry, Osborne, and Nicholson / 2016	Sex Roles	Examines how media images shape perceptions of female athletes, focusing on mechanisms that	Draws on hegemonic masculinity and gender role theories, arguing that media reinforce traditional gender norms by emphasizing femininity or	/	Thematic literature review	Lack of primary empirical data, with findings dependent on available literature	Female athletes are consistently underrepresented and often sexualized in media. Coverage tends to favor women in "gender-appropriate" sports and passive images, which may

		underrepresent or misrepresent women's sports.	sexualizing female athletes, thereby sidelining athletic achievements and maintaining male dominance in sports representation.				reinforce stereotypes. Some progress in reducing sexualized portrayals is noted, especially in Australasia, but overall visibility remains low, perpetuating gender inequality in sports media representation.
DiMaggio and Powell/ 1983	American Sociological Review	Explores why organizations in similar fields become increasingly homogeneous, attributing this trend to "institutional isomorphism" - a process that drives organizations to adopt similar structures and practices due to external pressures.	Suggests that modern organizations conform not just to competitive pressures but also to regulatory, cultural, and professional norms. They introduce three mechanisms of institutional isomorphism: coercive (due to legal or other pressures), mimetic (imitative behavior due to uncertainty), and normative (influences from professional standards).	/	Conceptual framework to describe and categorize mechanisms of isomorphic change,	Lacks empirical testing of its hypotheses, making it more foundational than directly applicable	The paper posits that organizations in structured fields become homogeneous because they face shared pressures to conform. These pressures stem from the need for legitimacy, the influence of professional standards, and imitation in the face of uncertainty. While these processes enhance legitimacy and stability, they may not improve efficiency, potentially leading to rigidity within organizational fields.
Morgan/ 2019	Journal of Marketing Management (**C**)	Investigates the motivations, benefits, and challenges of corporate sponsorship in women's sports, specifically examining the sponsorship of Australian Rules Football Women's League (AFLW) teams.	The study applies theories of corporate social responsibility (CSR), brand congruence, and relationship marketing. It posits that sponsorship in women's sports often serves dual purposes: fulfilling CSR by promoting gender equality and offering commercial benefits.	Interviews with decision-makers from 4 AFLW team sponsors in industries	Using qualitative, case-study methodology, the study draws insights from in-depth interviews and thematic analysis t	Use of one sport and four sponsor organisations in an Australian	AFLW sponsorships are motivated by both commercial and social goals, with brands seeing these partnerships as aligning with their values around diversity and equality. Sponsors report increased brand awareness and positive internal impacts, such as employee morale. However, challenges like limited media exposure and infrastructure constraints also persist. The findings suggest that women's sports sponsorship effectively merges CSR with commercial objectives, offering an underutilized avenue for brands to foster both corporate identity and social impact.

Matthews/ 2007	Sex roles	Examines the concept of "face-ism" in popular print media, exploring whether gender and occupational status affect facial prominence (face-to-body ratio) in magazine images, thereby potentially perpetuating gender stereotypes.	Building on the theory of face-ism, which suggests that higher facial prominence is associated with intelligence and authority, the study hypothesizes that men, especially in intellectual occupations, will have greater facial prominence compared to women, reinforcing traditional gender roles in media.	779 article-embedded photographs from six prominent U.S. magazines	Employed a quantitative content analysis, measuring face-to-body ratios for each image to assess facial prominence, categorizing subjects by gender and occupational status. Statistical analysis was used to test hypotheses about gender and occupational differences.	Focus on only six U.S. magazines,	Results showed that facial prominence was higher for men in intellectual occupations compared to women in similar roles, while women in physical roles showed higher facial prominence than men in comparable roles. This suggests that media continues to perpetuate subtle gender biases, reinforcing stereotypes about intelligence and authority through facial emphasis based on gender and occupational roles
Kane and Buysse/ 2005	Sociology of Sport Journal	Examines the visual representation of female and male athletes in intercollegiate media guides over time, investigating if and how these representations have shifted post-Title IX, especially in terms of reinforcing or challenging gender stereotypes.	Grounded in feminist theory and Michael Messner's concept of sports as "contested terrain," the study considers how media representations in sports reflect and reinforce broader gender power structures. The authors argue that visual portrayals of female athletes in media guide covers can subvert or uphold traditional gender norms	Media guide covers from 68 NCAA (*National Collegiate Athletic Association Division*) across six major athletic conferences over three periods (early 1990s, late 1990s, and early 2000s), covering 12 sports in which both men's and women's teams exist	Content analysis, the researchers coded images based on athletes' portrayal in uniform, court location, and active vs. passive poses, applying statistical analysis to identify significant patterns and changes over time.	exclusive focus on media guide covers, the analysis focuses only on NCAA Division	Findings reveal a significant shift towards more serious portrayals of female athletes over time, showing them in athletic poses on the court and in uniform, narrowing the portrayal gap with male athletes. However, disparities remain, especially in less popular sports. The study concludes that while progress is evident, the persistence of subtle gender biases suggests that gender portrayals in sports media remain a contested domain.
Amis/ 2003	European Sport Management Quarterly	Examines how Guinness strategically manages its brand image and reputation through sports-related initiatives,	Grounded in the resource-based view of the firm, focusing on intangible resources like brand image and reputation as key drivers of sustainable competitive advantage (SCA). It suggests that	(Interviews with brand managers, internal documents, media materials, and published reports)	Qualitative case study methods, including interviews and document analysis, to explore how Guinness managers use sports sponsorship to build brand identity	Focuses on a single brand, it primarily draws on management perspectives, lacking insights from consumers	Guinness effectively uses sports sponsorship to project a consistent brand image of "inner strength" while adapting this theme locally through sports like rugby, hurling, and football. This alignment of sports with brand values enhances

		exploring the use of sponsorship, advertising, and on-trade promotions to build a globally coherent yet locally resonant brand identity	sports associations serve as effective tools for developing and protecting these resource			or other stakeholder	Guinness's competitive position and reinforces its reputation as a brand synonymous with strength, quality, and cultural resonance. The study highlights that carefully managing these associations contributes significantly to sustaining competitive advantage in a crowded global market.
Jost, Banaji, and Nosek/ 2004	Political Psychology	Reviews a decade of research on system justification theory, which proposes that people, including those from disadvantaged groups, have a psychological tendency to defend and justify existing social, economic, and political arrangements, often unconsciously, even when it contradicts their self-interest.	System justification theory diverges from social identity and social dominance theories by emphasizing a general ideological motive to uphold the status quo. It suggests that individuals internalize societal structures, sometimes showing outgroup favoritism or rationalizing inequalities to maintain a sense of stability and legitimacy.	/	Meta-analysis,.	/	The review finds consistent evidence that individuals, including those from disadvantaged groups, exhibit behaviors and attitudes that justify the status quo. Key findings include the prevalence of implicit outgroup favoritism among marginalized groups, indicating that these individuals unconsciously accept stereotypes or biases favoring higher-status groups. This supports the idea that societal norms and ideologies can deeply influence individual attitudes, contributing to the persistence of social inequalities
Glick and Fiske/ 2001	American Psychologist (k.R)	Introduces and examines ambivalent sexism theory, which posits that sexism has two complementary forms—hostile sexism (HS) and benevolent sexism (BS). The study explores how these forms perpetuate gender inequality by supporting	Ambivalent sexism theory suggests that HS is overtly negative, viewing women as manipulative or incapable, while BS is more positive on the surface, idealizing women as nurturing but weak. Together, these attitudes reinforce gender roles by rewarding women who conform and punishing those who challenge societal norms	/	combination of correlational analyses and cross-cultural comparisons. They analyzed ASI (Ambivalent Sexism Inventory) scores to determine how HS and BS interact and vary across cultures with differing gender norms.	Reliance on self-report measures	Findings confirm that HS and BS are positively correlated across cultures, supporting traditional gender hierarchies in complementary ways. BS can create dependencies that deter women from challenging gender roles, while HS punishes non-conformity, thus reinforcing societal structures of inequality. This ambivalence makes gender biases difficult to combat, as BS often appears benign or

		traditional gender roles.					protective, masking its restrictive effects
Heilman/ 2001	Journal of Social Issues	Examines how descriptive and prescriptive gender stereotypes create barriers for women in advancing to high-level positions within organizations. It explores how stereotypes affect evaluations of women's performance, contributing to gender inequality in career advancement.	Drawing on social role and stereotype theories, the paper distinguishes between descriptive stereotypes (beliefs about how women generally are, such as being communal) and prescriptive stereotypes (expectations about how women should behave). Both forms contribute to biased evaluations by creating a "lack of fit" between stereotypical female traits and the characteristics deemed necessary for leadership.	/	Literature review	Does not include new empirical data, relying instead on past findings	The paper argues that stereotypes result in women's performance being devalued or attributed to external factors, even when successful. Women who demonstrate competence in traditionally male roles often face social penalties for violating prescriptive norms, being seen as less likable and more interpersonally hostile. This bias is difficult to counter, as prescriptive stereotypes are resistant to organizational interventions. Heilman concludes that stereotype-driven evaluations are a major barrier to gender equality in upper management.
Cunningham/ 2008	Sex Roles	Explores the processes and strategies required to foster and maintain gender diversity in sport organizations, focusing on overcoming institutionalized gender inequality through specific organizational change	Builds on institutional theory and diversity management frameworks, arguing that gender inequality is deeply embedded in sport organizations. It proposes that external pressures— political, functional, and social—can drive change	/	Theoretical model based on literature in institutional theory and organizational change.	Lacks direct empirical evidence	Cunningham argues that achieving gender diversity requires overcoming ingrained biases through structured change initiatives, with leadership support and comprehensive integration. The model outlines that while external pressures can initiate change, sustained diversity requires fostering employee commitment and incorporating diversity within all levels of the organization
Caple, Greenwood, and Lumby/ 2011	Media International Australia	Investigates the lack of media coverage for women's sports in Australian television, focusing on how the limited	The study builds on theories of media representation and gender, emphasizing that media's portrayal of sports reinforces gender stereotypes by favoring	Australian television coverage of sports, including a specific focus on news segments featuring	Both quantitative and qualitative content analysis, the study measured airtime, content type, and tone of sports coverage on Australian television.	Focuses on Australian media, primarily examines television news coverage	Female athletes received significantly less coverage than their male counterparts, with airtime often limited to event-driven moments, lacking the sustained attention given to men's sports. Positive portrayals

		representation impacts sponsorship opportunities and public awareness. Using the Matildas (Australia's women's national football team) as a case study.	male sports. It examines the cyclical nature of media coverage and sponsorship, which together shape societal perceptions of sports as a male-dominated field	women's sports between 2008 and 2009			were observed when women's sports were covered, though the quantity was disproportionately low. The study concludes that low visibility hinders sponsorship and recognition for female athletes, perpetuating the perception that sports are a male domain, thus reinforcing existing gender biases.
Jost/ 2006	American Psychologist	Revisits the end-of-ideology" thesis, which claimed that political ideology lacks cognitive structure, motivational potency, and behavioral significance for ordinary people. Jost argues that ideology remains highly relevant, influencing individual attitudes and behaviors, particularly in the context of contemporary political polarization and ideological divides	Draws on cognitive-motivational theories and recent political psychology findings, suggesting that ideologies satisfy psychological needs and affect behavior. The paper emphasizes the stability of ideological belief systems, and the distinct psychological profiles associated with liberal and conservative orientations.	Synthesizes findings from numerous empirical studies	Meta-analysis	Reliance on existing studies and surveys, Jost's critique of the "end-of-ideology" perspective may not address all modern factors influencing ideological expression, such as social media's role in ideological polarization.	Ideology provides cognitive structure, motivation, and behavioral significance, contradicting the end-of-ideology thesis, revitalizes the study of ideology, demonstrating its continued importance in modern political psychology.
Levant/ 2011	American Psychologist	Explores the psychology of men and masculinity through the Gender Role Strain Paradigm, examining how traditional masculinity	Builds on the GRSP, originally introduced by Pleck, which posits that traditional masculinity involves contradictory and often dysfunctional norms. The paradigm challenges essentialist views of masculinity and suggests	/	Literature review and meta-analysis approach, summarizing findings across studies and examining the psychometric properties of masculinity ideology measurement too	GRSP and the associated studies rely on self-report measures, MRNI and similar scales capture traditional masculinity ideologies, there are ongoing	Traditional masculinity ideologies are linked to adverse outcomes, including emotional restriction, health risks, and resistance to seeking help. He identifies three types of strain—discrepancy, dysfunction, and trauma—that illustrate the negative impact of traditional

		ideologies contribute to personal and societal issues. It emphasizes that masculinity is a social construct rather than an innate characteristic and identifies various strains that arise from adhering to masculine norms.	that gender roles are psychologically and socially constructed.			challenges with reliability and validity in measuring such complex constructs across diverse populations.	gender norms on men's psychological well-being. The findings support that gender role strain can lead to issues such as normative male alexithymia, which affects men's ability to express emotions.

Comparative Literature Table

Citation	Reinforcement of Gender Norms	Challenge to Gender Norms	Media Representation	Role of Masculinity	Sponsorship Influence	Career and Social Implications	Quantitative Analysis	Qualitative Insights
Cooky, Messner, and Hextrum (2013)	X		X	X			X	X
Cooky et al. (2021)		X	X			X	X	X
Fink (2015)	X		X		X	X		X
Kane (1988)	X		X	X				X
Shaw and Amis (2001)	X		X	X	X	X		X
Glick and Fiske (2001)	X						X	
Koenig et al. (2011)	X			X		X	X	
Anderson (2009)	X			X	X	X		X
Meenaghan (2001)					X			X
Meenaghan (1983)					X			X
Cornwell, Weeks, and Roy (2005)			X		X			X
Eisend (2010)	X	X	X	X			X	
Sherry, Osborne, and Nicholson (2016)		X	X					X
Messner, Duncan, and Jensen (1993)	X		X	X				X

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